

Think Blue & Green in 2013

Every New Year, people all over the world make resolutions to improve some aspect of their life. The most popular resolutions involve money management, learning something new and living healthier lives. This year, make a resolution that combines all three. A conscious decision to better the environment saves money and resources.

There are rewards for thinking blue and green that stretch from the environment to your wallet. You can also experience the positive impact a few simple behavior changes will have on our ecosystem. Make sure to check out "Fun Things to Do" at the end of this article.

Pre-Recycling: Reduce Waste First

Every Year, Americans generate 250 million tons of waste – that's enough to bury more than 93,000 football fields in six feet of trash! As waste generation increases so too will the cost of waste management and the rate at which natural resources are depleted. Think green in 2013 and stop waste at the source.

- **Bring Your Own Bag.** Every year, Americans dispose of approximately 1 billion shopping bags, creating 300,000 tons of landfill waste. Using reusable shopping bags decreases the amount of non-biodegradable plastic buried in landfills and prevents litter from contaminating soil and water supplies. Select retailers will even give you a discount for bringing your own bag! **Contact the City of Milpitas Reuse Line at (408) 586-2680 for a Free Reusable Bag.**

- **Take your own travel mug to the coffee shop** instead of using a disposable cup. Every paper cup saved helps keep our world's forests intact. Most coffee shops offer a discount when you remember to use your own mug.

- **Whenever possible, buy items in bulk** rather than multiple, smaller packages. This decreases the amount of packaging waste created. Most importantly, buy only what you will use!

- **Always use washable, not disposable, utensils and plates.** Plastic utensils are intended for one time use. When washed and reused, plastic utensils can harbor bacteria and other germs.
- **Stop junk mail.** More than 100 million trees are cut down every year to produce the 100 billion pieces of junk mail sent out to American households and businesses. It's good to recycle junk mail, but it's even better to stop getting it. Go to **StopJunkMail.org** for more information.
- **Try Composting.** In the U.S., yard trimmings and food scraps make up 27% of the national waste stream. Start a backyard composting pile or use a composting bin to process organic wastes from your kitchen and yard.

Finished compost can be used as a free, nutrient-rich soil amendment for gardens and flowerbeds or as a top-dressing for lawns.

For more information on how to get started and free composting workshops, visit **www.ReduceWaste.org** or call the **Rotline at (408) 918-4640.**



Saving Energy Saves Money

Remembering to bring your own shopping bag and coffee mug will earn you discounts at the store, but making these changes to save energy will have a longer lasting effect on your finances.



- **Change the five most frequently used lighting fixtures in your home to compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFL).** CFLs are recyclable and provide the same amount of light but use less energy. If every U.S. household took this simple step, the decreased need for energy would result in the same drop in emissions as removing almost 10 million cars from the road each year. To recycle CFLs, go to the pick-up area at **Orchard Supply Hardware 125 N. Milpitas Blvd** or the return desk of **Home Depot 1177 Great Mall Drive**. Never throw CFLs into the trash

- **Check your water heater.** Most water heaters are automatically set to temperatures well above what is actually necessary. Dial back your hot water heater temperature to 120 degrees Fahrenheit and you'll save 6% to 10% on your water heating costs.

- **Unplug electronics that drain energy at night.**



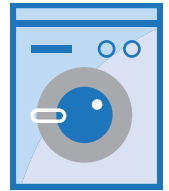
Plug home electronics, such as TVs, DVD players, and laptops into power strips; turn the power strips off when the equipment is not in use. By unplugging electronics at night instead of opting for energy saver mode, you can shave about 3% off your energy costs.

Wise Up About Water Use

Using water efficiently and saving energy are two practices that go hand in hand. Here are easy ways to save water around the house that cut utility bill costs:

- **Run your clothes washer and dishwasher with full loads only.**

You can save up to 1,000 gallons a month.



- **Use water-efficient showerheads and faucet aerators.** They're inexpensive, easy to install, and can save up to 750 gallons a month. Call the **Santa Clara Valley Water District** at **(408) 265-2600** or go online at **www.ValleyWater.org** to receive free showerheads and faucet alternators for the bathroom and kitchen by mail.

- **Turn off the water while brushing your teeth** and save 25 gallons a month.

- **Grab a wrench and fix that leaky faucet.** It's a low-cost, simple way to save 140 gallons of water a week.

- **Don't use running water to thaw food.** For food safety and water conservation, defrost food in the refrigerator.

- **When washing dishes, don't let the water run while rinsing.** Fill one basin or sink with soapy water and another with rinse water.

- **Water plants only when necessary.**

More plants die from over-watering than from under-watering.



Lend a Hand with Litter

Not only do we need to conserve our water supply, we also need to protect it from litter and other pollutants. The City of Milpitas hosts annual creek clean ups in conjunction with Coastal Cleanup Day. For more information on how you can get involved, visit **www.ci.Milpitas.ca.gov** during August for more information about the event on Saturday, September 21, 2013. Go to **www.MyWatershedWatch.org** to learn more about how you can keep pollution out of local creeks and the Bay.



- **Keep lids closed on recycling and garbage containers.** This prevents loose pieces from escaping and becoming litter. Set out containers no more than 12 hours before and take back no later than 12 hours after your collection day (MMC V-200-3.31).
- **Carry a litterbag in your car.** This way, you'll always have a convenient place to throw away garbage until you find a proper means of disposal.
- **Secure your load if you carry loose materials in a truck.** Items that blow from or fall out of vehicles create traffic hazards as well as litter.
- **Set a good example by not littering.**

Fun Things to Do

Experience first-hand the impact your actions have on the environment. Visit these centers and parks to reconnect with the natural world around you.

Don Edwards Alviso Educational Center

Part of the Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge, the Alviso Educational Center is a place just outside Milpitas where adults and kids can learn about wetlands, water supply, ecology, flood protection and how to foster environmental stewardship. Inside the center, you'll find two classrooms, an auditorium and an observation tower with interpretive signage aimed at teaching visitors about nature. Outside there is plenty to explore, including salt ponds, marsh and slough as well as trails that stay open long after the center is closed.

For directions and park hours, call the **Alviso Environmental Education Center** at (408) 262-5513 or visit **Don Edwards S.F. Bay National Wildlife Refuge** at <http://www.fws.gov/desfbay/index.htm>.

Ed R. Levin County Park

One of Santa Clara County's most unique regional park and recreation areas, this 1,541-acre park combines the traditional features of urban parks such as picnicking, fishing and play areas, with the complex trail system of regional wilderness parks. This park's extensive lawn area makes it a perfect destination for family outings while its amazing view of the valley floor and San Francisco Bay makes it the ideal getaway for those looking to simply bask in the wonders of the great outdoors.

Horseback riding, cycling, fishing, hiking, boating and hang gliding are just a few of the many activities available to park visitors. Boating and fishing are other popular activities at Ed R. Levin Park. Sandy Wool Lake is stocked from November through May. The park also offers visitors guided tours of its many trails as well as "Healthy Trails" fitness hikes for those looking for an adventurous way to stay in shape.

For directions and more information on the many things Ed R. Levin County Park has to offer, including special event inquiries and nature programs designed for kids, call (408) 262-6980 or visit <http://www.sccgov.org/sites/parks/Ride%20Here/Pages/Ed-Levin-County-Park.aspx>

Milpitas Parks

If you're looking for outdoor activity, Milpitas is the place for you. The City of Milpitas has 33 park locations with various amenities for your enjoyment – softball fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, handball courts, volleyball poles, horseshoe units, par courses and barbecue pits.

Gill Memorial Park at Paseo Refugio and Santa

Rita is a versatile park for family BBQs and sporting events. Equipped with a lighted softball diamond, three tennis courts, two handball courts, a basketball court and play equipment, this park offers lots of options. Enjoy a relaxing stroll along Berryessa and Tularcitos Creeks, which run along the park's borders.

Higuera Adobe Park at Wessex off N. Park

Victoria. This park hosts an historic building that provides a glimpse into the early days of Milpitas. Play equipment, 8 barbeque units, 16 tables, an abundance of trees and the soothing sounds of Calera Creek make this park the prime location to host BBQs and picnics.

Hidden Lake Park at N. Milpitas Blvd between

Escuela Parkway and Jacklin Road. Need a quick getaway? Located along Berryessa Creek, this park is the optimal setting to enjoy a picnic, walk or simply observe the many species of birds that frequent the lake as you unwind at this tranquil site.

Cardoza Park at Kennedy Drive and N. Park

Victoria. Set against the backdrop of the beautiful Diablo Range Mountains, this 10-acre park features a lighted softball diamond, two horse-shoe units, volleyball poles and an outdoor amphitheater. A great location for family events, Cardoza Park includes 8 barbeque units, 19 tables and play equipment.

For more information about Milpitas parks, rentals and events, call the **Milpitas Community Center** at (408) 586-3210 or visit <http://www.ci.Milpitas.ca.gov/government/recreation/parks.asp>.



**Questions?
(408) 586-2680**

